

CLAIMS

The invention is claimed as follows:

1. A gaming device comprising:
 - a plurality of reels;
 - 5 a plurality of symbols on said reels, wherein at least two of said symbols are flanking symbols, at least one of said symbols is a convertible symbol, and at least one of said symbols is a non-convertible symbol; and
 - a processor operable to cause the generation of at least
 - 10 one of said symbols on each of the reels, change said convertible symbol to one of said flanking symbols if said convertible symbol is generated on an active payline associated with one of said reels which is directly between two flanking symbols generated on said active payline associated with two of said reels, display any said change to a
 - 15 player, and provide the player an award based on any winning combination of symbols on the reels.
2. The gaming device of Claim 1, wherein a plurality of said
- 20 symbols are convertible.
3. The gaming device of Claim 2, wherein at least one of said flanking symbols is associated with one of said convertible symbols.
- 25 4. The gaming device of Claim 3, wherein said processor is operable to cause said generated convertible symbol to change to said associated flanking symbol if said convertible symbol is between at least one of said associated flanking symbols.
- 30 5. The gaming device of Claim 2, wherein said processor is operable to change a plurality of said convertible symbols if said convertible symbols are generated on a plurality of said reels and said convertible symbols are each between two flanking symbols.

6. The gaming device of Claim 1, wherein a plurality of said symbols are non-convertible.

7. The gaming device of Claim 1, wherein a plurality of said
5 symbols are flanking symbols.

8. A gaming device comprising:
a primary game operable upon a wager by a player;
a plurality of reels in said primary game;
10 a plurality of symbols on said reels, wherein said plurality of symbols include at least four symbols which are each adapted to function as a flanking symbol or as a convertible symbol, wherein upon a first play of the primary game, two of said symbols function as flanking symbols and one of said symbols functions as the convertible
15 symbol and upon a second play of the primary game, said convertible symbol of said first play of the primary game functions as the flanking symbol and one of said flanking symbols of said first play of the primary game functions as the convertible symbol; and
a processor operable for each play of the primary game to
20 cause the generation of at least one of said symbols on each of the reels, change each convertible symbol to one of said flanking symbols if said convertible symbol is generated on an active payline associated with one of said reels which is directly between two flanking symbols generated on said active payline associated with two of said reels,
25 display any said change to the player and provide the player an award based on any winning combination of symbols on the reels.

9. A gaming device comprising:
a plurality of reels;
a plurality of symbols on said reels, wherein one or more
of said symbols are flanking symbols, convertible symbols,
5 flanking/convertible symbols or non-convertible symbols;
a display device; and
a processor operable to cause the generation of at least
one of said symbols on each of the reels, designate said
flanking/convertible symbol as one of said flanking symbols or as one
10 of said convertible symbols if said flanking/convertible symbol is
generated on an active payline associated with one of said reels,
changing said convertible symbol to one of said flanking symbols if said
generated convertible symbol is directly between two flanking symbols
generated on said active payline associated with two of said reels,
15 display any said change to a player, and provide the player an award
based on any winning combination of symbols on the reels.

10. The gaming device of Claim 9, wherein the processor
enables the player to designate said flanking/convertible symbol as a
20 flanking symbol, a convertible symbol or both.

11. A gaming device comprising:
- a plurality of reels;
 - a plurality of symbols on said reels, wherein at least two of said symbols are flanking symbols, at least one of said symbols is a convertible symbol, at least one of said symbols is a non-convertible symbol and at least one of said symbols is a flanking/convertible symbol wherein said flanking/convertible symbol is adapted to be designated as either a flanking symbol, a convertible symbol or both; and
- a processor operable to:
- (a) cause the generation of at least one of said symbols on each of the reels;
 - (b) designate said flanking/convertible symbol as one of said flanking symbols or as one of said convertible symbols if said flanking/convertible symbol is generated on an active payline associated with one of said reels;
 - (c) change said designated convertible symbol to one of said flanking symbols if said flanking/convertible symbol is designated as one of said convertible symbols and said designated convertible symbol is directly between two flanking symbols generated on said active payline associated with two adjacent reels;
 - (d) change said convertible symbol to one of said flanking symbols if said flanking/convertible symbol is designated as a flanking symbol and said convertible symbol is directly between said designated flanking symbol and one of said flanking symbols on said active payline associated with two adjacent reels;
 - (e) change said convertible symbol to one of said flanking symbols if said convertible symbol is directly between two flanking symbols generated on said active payline associated with two adjacent reels;
 - (f) display any said changes to a player; and
 - (g) provide the player an award based on any winning combination of symbols on the reels.

12. The gaming device of Claim 11, wherein the processor enables the player to designate said flanking/convertible symbol as a flanking symbol, a convertible symbol or both.

5 13. The gaming device of Claim 11, wherein a plurality of said symbols are convertible.

14. The gaming device of Claim 11, wherein a plurality of said symbols are non-convertible.

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15. The gaming device of Claim 11, wherein a plurality of said symbols are flanking symbols.

16. A gaming device comprising:
15 a plurality of reels;
a plurality of symbols on said reels, wherein at least two of said symbols are flanking symbols, at least one of said symbols is a convertible symbol and at least one of said symbols is a non-convertible symbol; and
20 a processor operable to cause the generation of at least one of said symbols on each of the reels, change said convertible symbol to one of said flanking symbols if one of said flanking symbols is generated on an active payline associated with a first of said reels, said convertible symbol is generated on said active payline associated
25 with a second of said reels and one of said flanking symbols is generated on said active payline associated with a third of said reels reel wherein said second reel is directly between said first and third reels, display any said change to a player, and provide the player an award based on any winning combination of symbols on the reels.

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17. The gaming device of Claim 16, wherein a plurality of said symbols are convertible.

18. The gaming device of Claim 16, wherein a plurality of said symbols are non-convertible.

19. The gaming device of Claim 16, wherein a plurality of
5 said symbols are flanking symbols.

20. A gaming device comprising:
a plurality of reels;
a plurality of symbols on said reels, wherein at least two
10 of said symbols are flanking symbols, a plurality of said symbols are convertible symbols and at least one of said symbols is a non-convertible symbol; and
a processor operable to cause the generation of at least one of said symbols on each of the reels, change at least one of said
15 convertible symbols to one of said flanking symbols if one of said flanking symbols is generated on an active payline associated with a first of said reels, said convertible symbol is generated on said active payline associated with a second of said reels, said convertible symbol is generated on said active payline associated with a third of said reels
20 and one of said flanking symbols is generated on said active payline associated with a fourth of said reels wherein said second reel and said third reel are directly between said first and fourth reels, display any said change to a player, and provide the player an award based on any winning combination of symbols on the reels.

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21. The gaming device of Claim 20, wherein a plurality of said symbols are non-convertible.

22. The gaming device of Claim 20, wherein a plurality of
30 said symbols are flanking symbols.

23. The gaming device of Claim 20, wherein said convertible symbols on said second reel and said third reel are different symbols.

24. A gaming device comprising:
- a plurality of reels,;
 - a plurality of symbols on said reels, wherein at least two of said symbols are flanking symbols, at least one of said symbols is a convertible symbol, at least one of said symbols is a non-convertible symbol and a plurality of said symbols are flanking/convertible symbols wherein each of said flanking/convertible symbol are adapted to be designated as a flanking symbol or a convertible symbol;
 - a display device; and
 - a processor operable with said display device to:
 - (a) generate one of said flanking symbols on an active payline associated with a first of said reels;
 - (b) generate one of said flanking/convertible symbols on the active payline associated with a second of said reels;
 - (c) generate one of said flanking/convertible symbols on the active payline associated with a third of said reels;
 - (d) generate one of said flanking/convertible symbols on the active payline associated with a fourth of said reels;
 - (e) generate one of said flanking symbols on the active payline associated with a fifth of said reels;
 - (f) designate the flanking/convertible symbols on the second and fourth reel as flanking symbols;
 - (g) designate said flanking/convertible symbol on the third reel as a convertible symbol;
 - (h) change said designated convertible symbol on the third reel to one of said flanking symbols,
 - (i) designate the flanking/convertible symbols on the second, third and fourth reels as convertible symbols,
 - (j) change said designated convertible symbols on the second, third and fourth reels to one of said flanking symbols;
 - (k) display any said change to a player; and
 - (l) provide the player an award based on any winning combination of symbols on the reels.

25. The gaming device of Claim 24, wherein the processor is operable to enable the player to designate said flanking/convertible symbols as convertible symbol or a flanking symbols.

5 26. A gaming device comprising:
a plurality of reels;
a plurality of symbols on said reels, wherein at least two
of said symbols are flanking symbols, at least one of said symbols is a
convertible symbol, and at least one of said symbols is a non-
10 convertible symbol; and

a processor operable to cause the generation of at least
one of said symbols on each of the reels wherein the number of
generated flanking symbols is based on the wager by the player,
change said convertible symbol to one of said flanking symbols if said
15 convertible symbol is generated on an active payline associated with
one of said reels directly between two flanking symbols generated on
said active payline associated with two of said reels, display any said
change to a player and provide the player an award based on any
winning combination of symbols on the reels.

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27. A method of operating a gaming device, said method comprising the steps of:

(a) generating a plurality of symbols on a payline
associated with a plurality of reels, wherein at least one of said
25 generated symbols is a convertible symbol and a plurality of said
symbols are flanking symbols;

(b) changing said convertible symbol to one of said
flanking symbols if said generated convertible symbol is directly
between two generated flanking symbols;

30 (c) displaying any said change to a player; and

(d) providing the player an award based on any
winning combination of symbols on the reels.

28. The method of Claim 27, which is provided to the player through a data network.

29. The method of Claim 28, wherein the data network is an internet.

30. A method of operating a gaming device, said method comprising the steps of:

(a) generating a plurality of symbols on an active payline associated with a plurality of reels, wherein one or more of said symbols are flanking symbols, convertible symbols or flanking/convertible symbols;

(b) designating at least one of said flanking/convertible symbols as a flanking symbol;

(c) designating at least one of said flanking/convertible symbols as a convertible symbol;

(d) changing said convertible symbol to one of said flanking symbols if said convertible symbol is directly between two flanking symbols generated on two adjacent reels;

(e) displaying any said change to a player; and

(f) providing the player an award based on any winning combination of symbols on the reels.

31. The method of Claim 30, wherein the player is enabled to designate said flanking/convertible symbols as flanking symbols or convertible symbols.

32. The method of Claim 30, which is provided to the player through a data network.

33. The method of Claim 32, wherein the data network is an internet.

34. A method of operating a gaming device, said method comprising the steps of:

5 (a) generating a flanking symbol on an active payline associated with a first reel, a convertible symbol on the active payline associated with a second reel and a flanking symbol on the active payline associated with a third reel;

(b) changing said convertible symbol on the second reel to one of said flanking symbols if second reel is directly between said first reel and said third reel;

10 (c) displaying any said change to a player; and

(d) providing the player an award based on any winning combination of symbols on the reels.

35. The method of Claim 34, which is provided to the player
15 through a data network.

36. The method of Claim 35, wherein the data network is an internet.

37. A method of operating a gaming device, said method comprising the steps of:

5 (a) generating a flanking symbol on an active payline associated with a first reel, a flanking/convertible symbol on the active payline associated with a second reel, a flanking/convertible symbol on the active payline associated with a third reel, a flanking/convertible symbol on the active payline associated with a fourth reel, a flanking symbol on the active payline associated with a fifth reel;

10 (b) designating the flanking/convertible symbols on the second and fourth reel as flanking symbols and said flanking/convertible symbol on the third reel as a convertible symbol;

(c) changing said designated convertible symbol on the third reel to one of said flanking symbols if said flanking/convertible symbols on the second and fourth reel are designated as flanking symbols and said flanking/convertible symbol on the third reel is
15 designated as a convertible symbol;

(d) designating the flanking/convertible symbols on the second, third and fourth reels as convertible symbols;

(e) changing said designated convertible symbols on
20 the second, third and fourth reels to one of said flanking symbols;

(f) displaying any said change to a player; and

(g) providing the player an award based on any winning combination of symbols on the reels.

25 38. The method of Claim 37, wherein the player is enabled to designate said flanking/convertible symbols on the second and fourth reel as flanking symbols and said flanking/convertible symbol on the third reel as a convertible symbol.

30 39. The method of Claim 37, wherein the player is enabled to designate the flanking/convertible symbols on the second, third and fourth reels as convertible symbols.

40. The method of Claim 37, wherein the player is enabled to designate said flanking/convertible symbols on the second and fourth reel as flanking symbols and said flanking/convertible symbol on the third reel as a convertible symbol and subsequently to designate the flanking/convertible symbols on the second, third and fourth reels as convertible symbols.

41. The method of Claim 37, which is provided to the player through a data network.

42. The method of Claim 41, wherein the data network is an internet.

43. A method of operating a gaming device, said method comprising the steps of:

(a) generating a plurality of symbols on an active payline associated with a plurality of reels, wherein at least one of said generated symbols is a convertible symbol and a plurality of said symbols are flanking symbols, wherein the plurality of flanking symbols generated is based on a wager made by a player;

(b) changing said convertible symbol to one of said flanking symbols if said generated convertible symbol is directly between two generated flanking symbols;

(c) displaying any said change to the player; and
(d) providing the player an award based on any winning combination of symbols on the reels.

44. The method of Claim 43, which is provided to the player through a data network.

45. The method of Claim 44, wherein the data network is an internet.

46. A method of operating a gaming device, said method comprising the steps of:

- 5 (a) generating a plurality of symbols on an active payline associated with a plurality of reels for one game play, wherein said plurality of symbols include at least four symbols which are each adapted to function as a flanking symbol or as a convertible symbol, wherein two of said symbols function as flanking symbols and one of said symbols functions as said convertible symbol;
- 10 (b) changing said convertible symbol to one of said flanking symbols if said generated convertible symbol is directly between two generated flanking symbols;
- (c) displaying any said change to a player;
- (d) providing the player an award based on any winning combination of symbols on the reels; and
- 15 (e) repeating steps (a) to (d) for a plurality of game plays, wherein for each subsequent game play, said convertible symbol of said previous game play is adapted to function as said flanking symbol and one of said flanking symbols of said previous game play is adapted to function as said convertible symbol.

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47. The method of Claim 46, which is provided to the player through a data network.

48. The method of Claim 47, wherein the data network is an
25 internet.